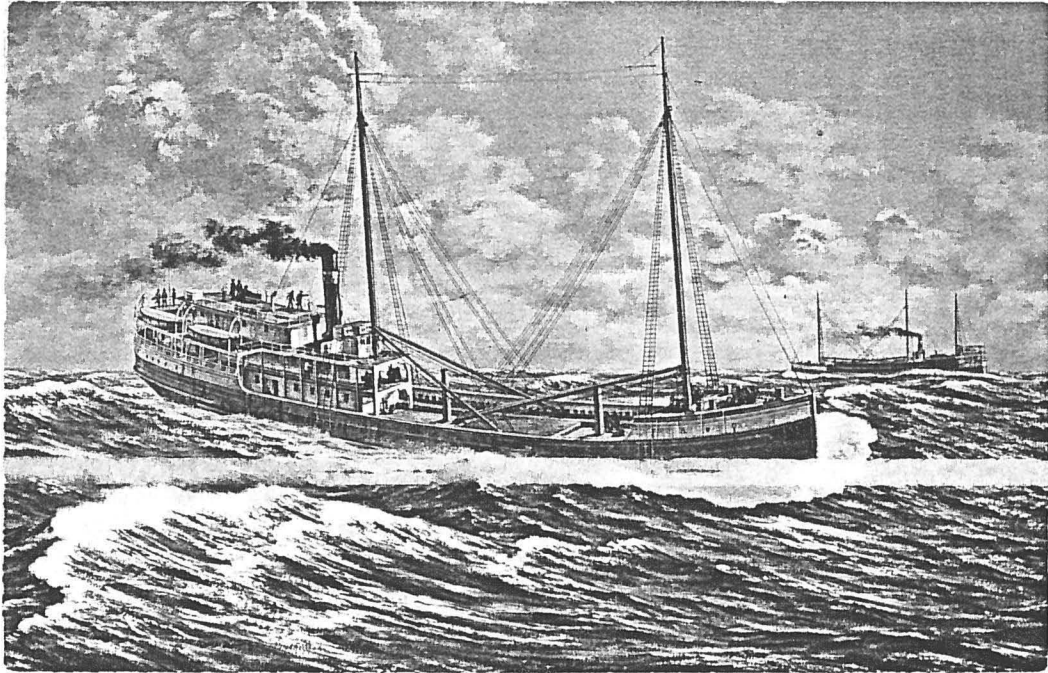




W A P A M A

painting by Oswald Brett

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S. S. WAPAMA

A History

Prepared as a Reference

for

The State of California  
Department of Parks and Recreation

by

Glenn E. Burch  
Historian-Exhibit Specialist  
San Francisco Maritime State Historic Park

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(107730)

### THE STEAM SCHOONER

The tub that I sing is an unlovely thing.

With her stern where her 'midships should be.

She fingers her nose at the sky as she goes

With her quarter all smothered a'lee.

She's peculiar designed, for her house is behind,

Like a fat woman sitting well aft,

But she navigates mad as no other rig could,

This sturdy amphibian craft.

Let those who lampoon her laugh at the steam schooner

With deckload as high as her stack,

But seamen who love 'er will tell you this of her:

She most always gets there and back.

By permission of James Quimby



### Charles R. McCormick

Charles R. McCormick came to Portland, Oregon in 1901 as a young man with twelve years experience in the Michigan lumber industry. He worked as a lumber salesman for a couple of years. Then, in 1903, he formed Chas. R. McCormick & Company, a lumber brokerage, with Sidney Hauptman, who had also come from Michigan. The success of the lumber brokerage led to a partnership of Charles R. McCormick, Sidney Hauptman, and Hamlin F. McCormick (Charles McCormick's brother) under the corporate name of McCormick-Hauptman Lumber Company of Eureka. The McCormick-Hauptman Lumber Company was based on a shingle mill and a "9 million-foot" redwood forest that only contained seven million feet. (This discrepancy in footage cost McCormick several thousand dollars.)<sup>1</sup>

It didn't take McCormick long to figure out that the cost of chartering ships was more than the profits on a load of lumber. McCormick engaged Captain Edward Jahnsen to advise him about entering the steamship end of the lumber business. Captain Jahnsen advised McCormick to buy a partially-built steam schooner then on the ways at Hans Bendixsen's Fairhaven Shipyard. A new McCormick enterprise, the Cascade Steamship Company was organized to finance and operate this vessel. In December of 1904, the Cascade sailed as McCormick's first ship under the command of Captain Jahnsen.<sup>2</sup>

McCormick gained his first holdings at St. Helens, Oregon in 1908, when he bought a burned out mill site and formed the St. Helens Mill Company. Needing lumber for the mill, Charles and Hamlin McCormick put together the St. Helens Timber Company and purchased the Maston Timber Tract consisting of 4,000 acres of timber property, including 160 acres of waterfront. A second mill and a creosoting plant were soon set up and production at St. Helens reached 210,000 feet of lumber per 10-hour day.<sup>3</sup>

Three new McCormick companies were formed in 1912. The St. Helens Lumber Company was to run the two mills. The creosoting plant was operated by the St. Helens Creosoting Plant. The third company was the St. Helens Shipbuilding Company that was destined to build the Wapama.<sup>4</sup>

### Steam Schooner

The steam schooner type vessel grew out of a need for lumber in the southern and central ports of California. Sailing vessels initially met such needs and continued to carry lumber long after steamships were introduced to the trade. Ships of any type are built to meet specific needs, and their design usually reflects their service and its economic factors, as well as technological developments. Steam schooner engines enabled them to operate more safely than their sailing predecessors. Wood for their construction was abundant and cheaper than steel. Their size was governed largely by the ports they entered. Improved cargo gear -- masts unencumbered with sail and very long booms -- made for quicker discharge and loading. All in all, they were able to out-carry -- through greater lumber capacities and shorter voyage duration -- the two, three, and four-masted sailing schooners.

The Surprise launched in 1884 from North Beach has as good a claim as any vessel to being the first steam schooner. At first, such vessels were similar to sailing vessels in hull form and rig, although built as steamers. By 1886, the steam schooner was a recognized and distinct type of vessel. The Klondike gold rush gave impetus to a building boom between 1898 and 1908. There had been more than 200 steam schooners built by 1923, when the Mathews Yard

turned out the last of the type. Building booms in Southern California and the reconstruction of San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake-fire boosted the need for lumber and lumber carriers. Corporate ownership and charter agreements helped finance the growth of the fleet.<sup>1</sup>

### Wapama

Charles R. McCormick must have liked the products of the Bendixsen Shipyard, for he turned to that Yard in 1912 to hire its Superintendent, J. H. Price, to take charge of the St. Helens Shipyard. The Multnomah was the first ship launched from the St. Helens Shipyard on 12 October 1912, and she set the general style of the McCormick steam schooners that were to follow. In fifteen years, 42 ships were launched from this Yard, making it one of the leading yards on the Pacific Coast.<sup>1</sup>

Named for Wapama Falls above Hetch Hetchy, the steam schooner Wapama was launched in April of 1915.

"New Lumber Carrier Slides Into River"

"Steamer Wapama, biggest ship in McCormick fleet, launched at St. Helens."

"St. Helens, Or., Jan. 21 - Witnessed by a crowd of nearly 1000 people, the big ocean-going boat Wapama was launched at St. Helens yesterday morning. Commodore Jahnsen, of the McCormick fleet, had charge of the ceremonies and was on the boat when she plowed into the water. Miss Mildred McBride, only daughter of Senator George McBride, of Portland, was sponsor and broke the bottle of champagne over the ship's bow, and 100 men as by clockwork released the wedges that held the boat and she glided down the ways. This is the 10th boat owned by the Charles R. McCormick Steamship Company, and is one of their largest. The vessel is named for a beautiful waterfall in California, all the boats of the Company being named after some fall or another. The boat is 215 feet in length, 41 feet

beam, has a 16-foot depth of hold, and cost in the neighborhood of \$150,000: it required 800,000 feet of lumber to build the vessel, and eight months were consumed in its construction.

"The boat will be towed to San Francisco by the steamer Kaloma where the engines and machinery will be installed. The boat will have a carrying capacity of 1,000,000 feet of lumber and accommodations for 65 passengers. She will be put on the Coastwise trade.

"J. H. Price, the builder and manager of the shipyards, took active charge of the launching, and stated that it was one of the most successful he has ever had. He is the superintendent of the yard, which employs from 85 to 100 men. H. F. McCormick attended the launching as a representative of the owners."<sup>2</sup>

The Klamath, not Kaloma, started south with Wapama in tow on 5 February 1915. On the way down the Coast, Wapama broke loose and had to be picked up by the tug Goliah which was, in turn, relieved of her charge by the McCormick steamer Multnomah. Arriving safely in San Francisco about the 13th, Wapama was turned over to the Main Street Iron Works.<sup>3</sup>

The Main Street Iron Works supplied engines and propellers for many steam schooners. Wapama's engine, built and supplied by Main Street, was of their intermediate size production model, having cylinders of 13-1/2", 23" and 40" with a stroke of 30". Two Babcock and Wilcox oil-fired boilers were used to supply steam. This arrangement gave an indicated shaft horsepower of 825, enough to push Wapama along at 10 knots.<sup>4</sup>

John Clerico, Port Engineer for the McCormick Steamship Company recalled that Wapama's engine required about 110 barrels of oil and six tons of water a day to keep going.<sup>5</sup>

Sidney Hauptman, Secretary of Charles R. McCormick & Company, completed Wapama's "Ownership Oath" on 29 April 1915. The ship was given official number 213 092, and was admeasured at 951 gross, and 584 net tons. Her first master was Commodore Edward Jahnsen, a naturalized citizen from Norway. She was enrolled and licensed for the Coastwise trade.<sup>6</sup>

Commodore Jahnsen took Wapama north for her maiden voyage, leaving San Francisco on 1 May 1915, and arriving at Astoria, Oregon on May 3rd. (Astoria was the entry port for St. Helens.) Six days were spent loading cargo and, undoubtedly, making adjustments. Then, Wapama started south, arriving in San Francisco where Commodore Jahnsen turned over his command to Captain Charles Green on 12 May, the date of arrival and departure.

Captain Green served for only three days, just long enough to get the ship to San Pedro where Captain John Foldat took over. After two days in port, Wapama turned north, sailing on the 14th and arriving back in San Francisco, her home port, on the 15th, and sailing again on the 17th for Astoria and Portland, where she arrived on the 20th. Wapama turned south again on the 24th, arriving in San Francisco only two days later where she spent two days before sailing to San Pedro.

8500  
+ 4950  
13450

9700  
4950  
14650

Wapama stayed overnight in San Pedro, sailing for San Francisco on the 29th and arriving on the 31st. She left San Francisco the same day and passed Tatoosh (Cape Flattery) on June 4th, arriving at Everett, Washington on the 5th, and proceeded to Tacoma. She sailed from Tacoma on the 9th, passing Tatoosh on the same day to arrive in San Francisco on the 12th. No shore leave for her sailors, she sailed the same day for San Pedro. This pattern was to hold true for Wapama throughout her McCormick career.<sup>7</sup>

Captain Hugo Clever recalled his time aboard Wapama as A.B. under Captain Foldat.

"I was in the Wapama. We unloaded lumber in San Pedro and then we loaded cement. You can imagine what that was when we got through. Then when that was through we had to go meet the train. The train comes alongside with passengers and we carried the baggage. Sometimes they wouldn't let us have the baggage. We looked like a bunch of, well, the worst you could ever see. Just cement on us from one end to the other."

"Hurry up, boys, get the baggage over!"

"And those poor fellows what bought tickets for the Wapama. Of course, I heard the story later; they show them in the offices, big ships with four stacks on them. When they came down, they have to come down to us. And here we were, about ten of us, going up to the train; the train come in and we had to carry all the baggage."

"Where you going with it?"

"On the ship."

"That's not the ship."



"Sure, that's the ship; that's the Wapama." <sup>8</sup>

Having loaded cement and passengers, Wapama sailed north on 14 June, stopping at Redondo Beach on the 15th, and arriving San Francisco on the 18th. She sailed again the next day, the 19th, and arrived at Astoria, Oregon on the 21st. St. Helens was about 40 miles up river from Astoria.

Ernest Fisher was superintendent at St. Helens at the time:

"We used to load two of the steam schooners here (St. Helens) every week. They'd pull out on Friday night with twelve passengers. They'd bring them down from Portland in the steamer America. They'd transfer them here, baggage and everything. There would be two loading at this mill;..." <sup>9</sup>

In the meantime, Charles R. McCormick & Company were undergoing corporate maneuvers which resulted in Wapama's sale, "for the consideration of ten dollars, <sup>10</sup> to the Wapama Steamship Company which Charles R. McCormick controlled.

Wapama cleared Astoria on September 4, 1915 for San Francisco. One day out she took in tow the American Schooner Alpena, which she towed to San Francisco, arriving on the 6th. <sup>11</sup> Alpena, a four-master of 970 gross tons, had been built by Hall Brothers at Port Blakeley, Washington in 1901. <sup>12</sup> Alpena, long one of the most constant dividend-payers on the Coast, was on her way to Florida where she foundered in December of 1915. <sup>13</sup>

Two days out of San Francisco on 27 September 1915, Wapama took the whaling bark Bowhead in tow and delivered her to San Pedro

on the 28th.<sup>14</sup>

In late November, Wapama made her first international voyage to Townsend in Vancouver, B. C. On entering the Fraser River, on 27 November 1915, Wapama grounded at 0230 in thick weather on a silt bottom. Captain Foldat awaited the rising tide which re-floated Wapama at 0650. She suffered no damage and continued her normal runs.<sup>15</sup>

On leaving San Francisco 6 December, bound for San Pedro, Wapama found her way onto a mud bank at the foot of Jones Street. Again she got off uninjured and continued her normal routine.<sup>16</sup>

Captain Foldat was fairly typical of steam schooner skippers in that he was born in Northern Europe, Russia in his case, and immigrated to the United States. His naturalization in the Clatsop County Court on August 4, 1902 allowed him to become a licensed officer.<sup>17</sup>

The steam schooner fleet was commonly referred to as the "Scandinavian Navy" as most steam schooner sailors reputedly came from Scandinavia. Wapama's crew list of 7 January 1916 doesn't corroborate this belief. Her deck department was largely from Northern Europe:

| Name                   | Nationality | Age | Wages/<br>Month |
|------------------------|-------------|-----|-----------------|
| J. Foldat, Master      | Russia      | -   | \$ -            |
| Carl Nygen, 1st Mate   | Sweden      | 40  | 100.00          |
| H. Maland, 2nd Mate    | Norway      | 29  | 85.00           |
| M. Phillips, Winch Dr. | Germany     | 41  | 55.00           |
| Joe Gregory, Winch Dr. | So. America | 39  | 55.00           |

| <u>Name</u>               | <u>Nationality</u> | <u>Age</u> | <u>Wages/<br/>Month</u> |
|---------------------------|--------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| E. Rasmussen, Watchman    | Denmark            | 40         | \$ 50.00                |
| Th. Pelrich, AB           | Germany            | 39         | 50.00                   |
| K. Heesepp, AB            | Norway             | 30         | 50.00                   |
| C. Wendstandt, AB         | Germany            | 29         | 50.00                   |
| J. Lass, AB               | Germany            | 28         | 50.00                   |
| R. Tougal, AB             | England            | 27         | 50.00                   |
| W. Maken, AB              | Russia             | 27         | 50.00                   |
| T. Rosenthal, AB          | Russia             | 32         | 50.00                   |
| Otto Hengst, AB           | Germany            | 39         | 50.00                   |
| J. W. Mower, Wireless Op. | Penn., USA         | 20         | 10--                    |
| A. H. Doty, Wireless Op.  | Calif., USA        | 22         | --                      |

The engineering crew or "Black Gang" were largely Spanish:

|                           |           |    |           |
|---------------------------|-----------|----|-----------|
| A. Gardner, Chief Eng.    | USA       | 42 | \$ 150.00 |
| J. W. Riesling, 1st Asst. | Ill., USA | 47 | 100.00    |
| John Broder, 2nd Asst.    | Canada    | 35 | 85.00     |
| Joseph Alviso, Fireman    | Spain     | 35 | 55.00     |
| F. Rodriguez, Fireman     | Spain     | 30 | 55.00     |
| T. Ribeno, Foreman        | Spain     | 53 | 55.00     |
| M. A. Glacross, Oiler     | Spain     | 53 | 50.00     |
| E. F. Good, Oiler         | Ill., USA | 23 | 50.00     |
| P. Feal, Oiler            | Spain     | 42 | 50.00     |

... While the stewards department were English and American:

|                        |               |    |          |
|------------------------|---------------|----|----------|
| J. Pennington, Steward | British Isles | 32 | \$ 70.00 |
| J. McMillen, Cook      | New Zealand   | 34 | 50.00    |
| H. Fletcher, 2nd Cook  | England       | 31 | 50.00    |
| L. J. Collins, Messman | Oregon, USA   | 29 | 35.00    |
| J. F. McCarthy, Waiter | Mass., USA    | 33 | 35.00    |
| R. M. Nichale, Waiter  | Calif., USA   | 19 | 35.00    |

These Articles, signed in San Francisco, were for a voyage to Guaymas, Mexico. Wapama left the Golden Gate on 7 January, arrived San Pedro on the 9th, and left the same day for Guaymas where she discharged her cargo and turned north to resume her usual round of voyages, carrying lumber and passengers up and down the Coast.<sup>18</sup> Passenger fare from St. Helens to San Francisco was \$10.00

at the time.<sup>19</sup>

In mid-May 1917, Wapama left San Francisco on a routine voyage to Astoria and St. Helens. On the 17th, at Rainier, she collided with the steamer Doris, doing no damage.<sup>20</sup> Doris was a Dickie-built steam schooner of 725 gross tons.<sup>21</sup>

Just a month later on 16 June 1917, Wapama had another mishap. Approaching San Diego from San Pedro in a dense morning fog, she grounded on a mudbank. The U. S. Navy Tug Iroquois towed her off at 1100.<sup>22</sup>

The steamboat inspection service made a practice, as the Coast Guard still does, of occasionally sending traveling inspectors along on various ships. We know of two such trips on the Wapama. Inspector Cecil Brown made the trip from San Pedro to San Francisco in July of 1917, filing his report on the 23rd. He listed the ship's officers as: John Foldat, Master; George Ryerson, Mate; Bertold Leep, 2nd Mate; Axel A. Fagerlund, Chief Engineer; and Tracy C. Loomis, 2nd Engineer. There was no 1st Assistant Engineer aboard at the time. Inspector Brown commented on Wapama's lack of mechanical davits, which he was told were not necessary, as the ship did not sail more than twenty miles offshore.<sup>23</sup>

John C. Lass, who would later sail as master, was an A. B. in Wapama under Captain Foldat.

"She ran from Portland to San Pedro then. I don't think we ever took cargo to San Francisco. Of course, we always

called northbound and southbound to San Francisco, as we carried passengers. We went to San Diego practically every trip. They had their own yard there, and one at San Pedro, too. I was in her two years as an A. B. We made one trip down to Mazatlan with lumber for the Southern Pacific. "24

E. A. Jansen was one of Lass' fellow A. B. s in Wapama and was also destined to become a licensed master.

"Did John Lass tell you the story about the pig? I was on the Wapama then, too. There was John, Otto Hienz, Ryerson, Walter Dunn, and myself, all A. B. s. We were up in Aberdeen and there was a fair there going on, and a lot of raffling. One of the things you could win in this raffle was a little pig, so John Lass won the pig. He brought it on board and he made a little pen for him in the after end. That pig -- he got so he wanted hotcakes every morning, but they had to be buttered and jam on them, otherwise he wouldn't eat them. Finally, one day we all decided he was too big and we had to slaughter him. The cook, he got wind of that and he said, 'Well, you kill the pig and I quit!' I don't know what really became of it..."<sup>25</sup>

Wapama arrived at San Diego on September 17, 1917, and sailed again on the 18th to arrive in San Francisco on the 20th with the steam schooner Edna Christenson in tow.<sup>26</sup> The Edna Christenson had just been built by Charles E. Fulton in the Wilmington Shipbuilding Company Yard at Wilmington, and was on her way to San Francisco where, like Wapama, the Main Street Iron Works installed her machinery.<sup>27</sup>

Mildred McBride, the young lady who broke the champagne bottle over Wapama's bow traveled south on the vessel in 1918.<sup>28</sup>

Otherwise, nothing of note occurred in 1918 or 1919. The usual round of Coastwise sailings were made and recorded in the newspapers:

"Portland, April 2 - With passengers for California ports and cargo of lumber loaded at St. Helens for San Diego, the steamer Wapama departed today."

"To arrive at San Francisco Saturday, April 5 from Portland and Astoria - Steamer Wapama."<sup>29</sup>

In May, Captain O. C. Orland joined the ship, giving Captain Foldat a vacation. Foldat rejoined his ship at Portland in June.<sup>30</sup>

The second traveling inspection was conducted in February of 1920. Wapama was sailing without either a Chief Mate or a 1st Assistant Engineer. Captain Foldat is shown as master with Johan Bro, 2nd Mate; Axel Fagerlund was Chief Engineer, and James Potwin was 2nd Assistant Engineer.<sup>31</sup> Axel Fagerlund had signed on in 1917 and made a home for himself, not leaving Wapama until 1927.<sup>32</sup>

Later, in the year 1920, Captain Foldat was fined \$500.00 for sailing his ship short-handed. Wapama sailed from St. Helens to San Francisco short one assistant engineer. According to Captain Foldat's letter requesting remittance of the fine, the assistant went ashore at St. Helens and didn't come back before sailing time. Fagerlund, the chief engineer, didn't feel the assistant was necessary and there wasn't a replacement available in St. Helens, so Wapama proceeded

short-handed. The inspection service ruled it a case of desertion and returned the Captain's money.<sup>33</sup>

Captain Foldat ended his Wapama service just two months short of five years on 18 February 1920. The ship was in San Francisco when Captain Olaus Bellesen took command.<sup>34</sup> Bellesen obtained his original masters license in 1909. Eventually, his unlimited masters license was endorsed for pilot of San Francisco Bay and tributaries to Benicia, San Pedro Bay, San Diego Bay, Grays Harbor, Astoria, and Puget Sound between Tacoma and the sea. His pilotage endorsements were the result of some twenty years sailing on the Pacific Coast.<sup>35</sup>

By the early 1920s, McCormick ships had built a good reputation carrying passengers and freight up and down the Coast. Still, most of the freight income was from lumber cargoes. Northbound, the McCormick ships were carrying passengers and small cargoes. McCormick called Charles Wheeler, who had been running the St. Helens Dock & Terminal Company in to improve the shipping operations. The shipping business had been run by the Parr-McCormick Steamship Company since 1915, although most of the ships were owned by individual companies such as the Wapama Steamship Company. Freight rates were low and the cargoes didn't pay well. Wheeler laid the blame on lack of frequency and regularity. He proposed a new company that would own and operate the vessels, doing away with

multiple ownership, and stress public service.<sup>36</sup>

The Maritime Unions, six of them, struck for higher wages and better conditions in the summer of 1921. West Coast shipping was at a standstill in May, June, and July.<sup>37</sup>

A month later, in August, Wheeler formed the McCormick Steamship Company in order to combine management and ownership of the McCormick fleet. Wapama's ownership was transferred to the new company in November of 1922, joining the Willamette, Multnomah, Celilo, Wakeena, and Everett.<sup>38</sup>

The McCormick fleet made it a practice to build good will. Captains often invited local reporters aboard to discuss the voyage over a meal.<sup>39</sup>

By 1924, McCormick was involved in nine separate companies. Much of the property and ships were under mortgages and McCormick felt the need to consolidate, so the Charles R. McCormick Lumber Company of Delaware was formed by merger on 5 May 1925. The McCormick Steamship Company and the McCormick Intercoastal Steamship Company were not included in the merger.<sup>40</sup>

At this point McCormick Steamship Company was operating seventy-one ships servicing 23 ports on the Pacific Coast. In September 1925, Wapama's ownership was transferred to the Charles R. McCormick Lumber Co. of Delaware.<sup>41</sup>

By 1924, the St. Helens mills began to run out of timber and Charles McCormick started negotiations with Pope & Talbot for their



Port Gamble mill property. Negotiations dragged into July of 1925, when a deal was finally worked out for McCormick to purchase over 92,000 acres of Pope & Talbot timberland in return for \$15,000,000 and stock in Charles R. McCormick Lumber Co. of Delaware. The Puget Mill Company was turned over to McCormick in October of 1925.<sup>42</sup>

Carl Carlson, later Captain Carlson, sailed in Wapama under Captain Bellesen:

"In the Wapama in them days, it was four hours on and four off. There was only two sailors on watch, one at the wheel, and one at lookout. Then, afterwards, they passed a law that you had to have so many men; one lookout, one at the wheel, and one spare man; in case they want something, they can call him. There were two day men, too. They washed paint and chipped.

"The Wapama carried only twelve passengers or so when I was on her, plus some in steerage on one side of the foc's'le. My, I felt sorry for them. God, they were seasick. That's the worst place you can be, in the bow; it goes up and then hits.

"The passengers had the run of the Wapama; there was no restriction there. Of course, they weren't supposed to be on the bridge. You could lose your license for that, but they did."

"'Hungry Joe' was steward in the Wapama in them days, you know. The steward, he could always chisel on things and somehow he was ordering the stores and one thing and another. Then he was bootlegging, too, I think. He packed it on board, got it somewhere else. He got it in 'Frisco' and took it up north. See, California was wet, but Washington and Oregon was dry."<sup>43</sup>

A Portland dock clerk recalled that:

"...this vessel carried lumber from St. Helens to San Francisco and Los Angeles, ... she carried mostly sugar, canned goods, salt, rice and beans on her return trips.

"I was dock clerk at the Couch Street Dock (now in the center of Portland) and often took the lines when she berthed. Captain Bellesen would shout instructions to me through his megaphone from the bridge. If things were not going right, all Portland could hear about it in language not used in the best of society.

"Captain Bellesen would always serve a highball in his quarters immediately after the docking. He had a fondness for phonograph records, and always had a lively new tune just presented to him by his daughter.

"Everyone looked forward to having the Wapama in port. There was never a dull moment when Captain Bellesen was around."<sup>44</sup>

Passenger fare was then \$5.00 between San Francisco and Los Angeles, and \$9.00 between San Francisco and Seattle.<sup>45</sup>

Olaus Bellesen turned Wapama over to Captain Martin Muhrer on 1 May 1926.<sup>46</sup> Captain Muhrer had Wapama when she picked up an ex-Alaska Packer in San Francisco Bay for a tow to San Pedro.

James Willey recalled that:

"We were working for Jimmy Coffroth that time when we took the Star of India down to San Pedro and from there to San Diego. Several days were spent in Oakland Creek getting her ready. I remember we hired some scrub-women and they gave her a good soogying

down inside.

"Then a tug took us over to the San Francisco side and we dropped anchor about three ships' lengths off pier 40. We stayed there for three days... Then the Wapama came along and passed us a towline. We had an engineer aboard for the purpose of running the donkey engine and getting the anchor, but it was damnably hard work with, as I remember, about six men total aboard to go through all the catting and fishing of the anchor with ancient gear that she had.

"That Wapama had plenty of power; she snaked us out of here like a shot and right on down the Coast. It was a calm passage all the way -- the calmest I ever made on the Coast, for that matter. We dropped anchor off San Pedro and waited for a navy tug to come up from San Diego to take us the rest of the way."<sup>47</sup>

The Star of India, ex-Euterpe, had been purchased by the San Diego Zoological Society for use as a maritime museum. Today she is restored and open to the public in San Diego.

Captain Muhrer served nine months as master of Wapama, turning the ship over to Niels C. Ronberg on 9 February 1927, at Seattle.<sup>48</sup>

Captain Ronberg went to sea at age fourteen. Born in Leming, Denmark, Ronberg sailed in several deep-water ships, including the five-masted ship Preussen at the time of her sinking in 1910. He immigrated to the United States and obtained a license. "I shipped in the Wapama in 1922 and I was mate in her until January 1927."<sup>49</sup>

"There was rough handling of a ship in those days. In San Diego we loaded the chain from those Benson log rafts that were towed down there to be broken up. About 300 tons of chain -- those rafts had five to six million board feet in them.

"On Wapama we ranged the chain from bulwark to bulwark under #2 gear. To protect the bulwarks we used the 4 x 12 stanchions that you ordinarily use upright for carrying piling. We put the 4 x 12 on top of the bulwark, one inside and one outside for chafing gear. But taking in and later discharging that chain was still hard on the rails.

"In the Columbia River we dropped it right on top of the raft. One time a raft opened up and 300 tons of chain went to the bottom.

"You had to be young and strong to hold down the mate's job in those ships...that Wapama was the toughest job I was ever in, and I was there for almost five years. The mate had to do everything; he was stevedore boss, super cargo, had to run the crew, watch the stowing of the ship. You had to be on the deck watching; you had to be on your feet; you had to be up on your feet every moment. You had to watch the longshoremen up at the back of the lumber yard or they would be loafing and there would be no trucks of lumber down alongside the ship... When I went down in the hold to watch the stowing, I didn't climb the ladder; I went down on the cargo hook.

"The second mate was always busy tending hatch; he had to tend hatch for two gears...he had to use both hands."50

"I'll never forget that hold; I nearly got killed the second trip I made on it. We had just come into St. Helens, there, and started loading lumber there at eight o'clock in the morning. We had a long load of lumber. I relieved the chief mate; he wanted coffee there on 9:30...

The Captain and steward were the only ones in uniform.

The mates wore caps.

The steward had complete charge of the passengers and supplied a typed menu each day.<sup>53</sup>

Ronberg was Captain of Wapama less than a month, turning the ship over to John J. Silvia on 24 February 1927 at San Francisco.<sup>54</sup>

Captain Silvia left Wapama for a month in December 1928, being relieved by Oscar Salo, and returned to serve as captain until 23 January 1929. At this time Captain Salo took command again, in Seattle, and sailed Wapama to San Francisco where he was relieved by Carl J. Johanson.<sup>55</sup>

Captain Johanson was Wapama's regular skipper until May of 1935. He was relieved in August 1929, by Captain Peter Lund, and again in December 1931, by Captain George Wedelsted, for vacation.<sup>56</sup>

Los Angeles-San Francisco Navigation Company

During Johanson's tenure as Captain, Wapama left the McCormick fleet. Mr. Gillespie operated the Los Angeles-San Francisco Navigation Company and shifted the ownership of his vessels around between the members of his immediate family. An ownership oath was entered with U.S. Customs on 20 May 1930. The new owner was, officially, Claudine C. Gillespie of Pier 17, San Francisco. On 19 May 1931, Albert E. Gillespie became owner of the Wapama, only to be replaced by Claudine again on 11 April 1932, now of 2633 Green Street, San Francisco. Claudine lost the ship again to Charles Gillespie on 8 July 1933.<sup>1</sup>

Charles Gillespie recalled that:

"My father bought the Celilo and Wapama from the McCormick Company. I really don't know what he paid for the vessels; I think it was something like \$10,000 apiece...

"We had a fellow named Johanson as Captain on the Wapama; he came over from McCormick.

"Either on the Wapama or the Celilo we pulled the gear down one time. We hooked on to a heavy reel of cable and both the masts were pulled down. I think it was the Wapama, and it happened here in San Francisco. That incident caused a little trouble and concern. The shipper had given us the wrong weight and we took hold of it and down came all the gear."<sup>2</sup>

A waterfront reporter wrote up the dismasting in the San

Francisco Chronicle of 6 December 1932.

"Some ships don't have to go to sea to get in trouble. The usually very good little Wapama proved that Sunday by putting on a small tantrum right at the wharf. It wasn't serious and no one particularly was to blame, but it just shows that even the gentlest of ladies will get temperamental on occasions.

"The occasion of the Wapama flare-up was an attempt to hoist a sixteen and one-half ton cable reel on equipment not quite of that caliber. The lady Wapama resented that and forthwith snapped off both her masts clean as whistles flush with the deck.

"And - just as if that wasn't enough for one afternoon, the cable reel, which was never lifted off the barge, proved too much of a burden for its carrier and forthwith rolled off into the deep green Bay, when the latter sagged under its own weight. This necessitated another big barge with a derrick and a diver. All in all, it was quite a show. Throngs of Sunday and Monday motorists along the Embarcadero took it in."<sup>3</sup>

Dismasting wasn't Wapama's only accident while with the Los Angeles-San Francisco Navigation Company. Charles Gillespie recalled that: "...the Wapama hit the breakwater at Long Beach and did quite a little bit of damage. It was a little foggy."<sup>4</sup>

Mrs. Katherine Byrnes relates:

"...made several vacation trips to Los Angeles on Wapama and I met my husband there in February. He was a messman, a kind of steward, and I think he was on the Wapama since 1930... We were married on board the Wapama by Captain Johanson on June 13, 1933... Captain Johanson had to get permission from Washington to marry us."

"We left San Francisco and Captain Johanson took the Wapama beyond the 12-mile limit. The men in the crew got all excited; they didn't know what was going on... at 9 p.m. everybody gathered in the social hall, where the captain married us... We had three trips together on the Wapama; I had my vacation, three weeks..."<sup>5</sup>

In October and November of 1935 Tom Farrell shipped on Wapama as part of the "black gang":

"I shipped on the Wapama to make the where-withal to get back to my home port of Seattle. Wapama ran between Long Beach and San Francisco, owned by the Los Angeles-San Francisco Navigation Company, and was a good job. At that time it was a steam atomizer on the boiler with a single check between them. On leaving either Long Beach or San Francisco the fireman on watch would set the boilers, set the extra feed, and no one would touch anything in the fireroom (except to tap a burner occasionally to knock the carbon off the tip when water would rise in that boiler) until we got the stand-by on the telegraph."<sup>6</sup>

Captain Johanson terminated his command of Wapama on 3 May 1935, at San Francisco, when Captain A. F. M. Abbors assumed command.<sup>7</sup> In slightly less than two years in command Captain Abbors ran a taught ship. He received a congratulatory letter from his employers commending Wapama's efforts at safety, which helped the company win third place in a Coastwise safety contest.<sup>8</sup>

Captain Abbors ran a safe ship, but he couldn't guarantee a smooth ride. Charles Williams and his bride made a honeymoon trip from Wilmington, California to San Francisco in 1936. It was a rough trip; only Mr. Williams and one other passenger escaped



seasickness. There was a full load of passengers and several autos, including Mr. Williams' on deck. Mr. and Mrs. Williams paid \$12.00 each to make the trip and another \$12.00 for the car.

As most of the passengers were seasick, the dining room was nearly empty. Mr. Williams took his choice of chairs. When the Captain came in, he told Mr. Williams in no uncertain terms that he was in the Captain's chair and to move out but fast.<sup>9</sup>

By October of 1937, the Los Angeles-San Francisco Navigation Company was the only firm operating Coastwise service between the two principal ports on the California Coast. The depression was on. Increased operating costs and labor disturbances were cited by the company as cause for decreased services in an appeal for more cargo routings.<sup>10</sup> The appeal must not have helped, for Erik Krag bought Wapama on 20 April 1937, at which time Captain Abbors turned the ship over to Captain I. Halverson.<sup>11</sup> Mr. Krag was the President of Viking Steamship Company of Nevada, which was listed as Wapama's owner. Mr. Krag and his partner Harry Brown, who bought Celilo from L. A. S. F. about the same time, operated as the Inter-Ocean Steamship Corporation.

"I didn't get the Wapama directly from Mr. Charles R. McCormick...I think it was the Los Angeles-San Francisco Navigation Company that owned her at the time that I bought her... I bought her in 1937. We had incorporated the Viking Steamship Company on April 15, 1937 for the purpose of operating the Wapama, which I had bought personally...We tried to find a way to make

a little money on her, but we soon found out that the costs were getting heavy. We made a few trips between Coos Bay and California, and I think her last voyage for us was with a load of lumber for Santa Cruz.

"I bought her reasonably; that was the first reason I bought her, because she was cheap. I think \$12,500 was what I paid for her. Then I spent another \$10,000, I think, in the shipyard. She went to Bethlehem after I took her over, for winch repairs and other general repairs to get her in class. Her cargo was just ordinary lumber. We had, I think, two trips to Oakland and we had this last trip to Santa Cruz.

"As you know, there is quite an undertow down at Santa Cruz and when the ship got down there and was half unloaded, she broke her lines; finally they managed to secure her again and we got rid of the lumber.

"After Santa Cruz, we laid her up in the estuary and I guess she was laid up for a couple of months or more. Then the Alaska Navigation Company of Seattle came along and wanted to buy her."12

Alaska Transportation Company - Tongass

Winston Jones, General Manager of the Alaska Transportation Company surveyed the Wapama on Thanksgiving Day 1937. The ship was accepted and title transferred on 23 December 1937. Krag received about \$27,000 for Wapama, which was purchased to replace the Zapora which had recently been lost by shipwreck.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Jones and a Chief Engineer started getting Wapama ready for sea while she lay at the outer harbor wharf in Oakland:

"I came down aboard the ship one day and the chief engineer...told me that there was a good-looking tank over in the field...so I bought this tank and put it aboard with the idea to handle fish oil and deisel oil and whatever I could. In order to handle the cargo oil, I had to put in a pump. In those days we could hardly afford anything new, so we found a huge pump in the second-hand yard that would do the work even though it was much larger than we actually needed. So we hooked it up with the tank and at the same time hooked it up with the bilge. It was fortunate that we did, because we would have lost the ship. One trip, going north, she broke a tailshaft that started flooding the engine room, and had we not that heavy-duty pump there to keep the water out, we would have lost the ship."<sup>2</sup>

Wapama started north in February 1938 under Captain Olaf Hansen, with a full cargo of rock salt, loaded at Howard Terminal, for Captain Shield's use in the C. A. Thayer.<sup>3</sup>

The firm of W. C. Nickum and Sons, naval architects of Seattle were engaged to lay out plans for altering Wapama's

passenger accommodations and cargo arrangements. A half-'tween deck was laid in the fore part of the hold and refrigerated compartments were built in. Two separate size reefer boxes were necessary, as refrigerated cargoes were small going north and large coming south. Southbound, frozen fish made up most of the cargo. The refurbishing was accomplished by the Lake Union Drydock and Construction Company, being completed in May of 1938.<sup>4</sup>

On February 4, 1938, the vessel's name was changed from Wapama to Tongass for the Tongass National Forest in Southeastern Alaska.<sup>5</sup>

Captain Eldred Hansen took command of Tongass on 6 April 1938 while she was still in shipyard, and started leading the ship through such documentary changes as registration, change of home port to Tacoma from San Francisco, and admeasurement. The alterations and re-admeasurement resulted in Tongass' gaining gross tonnage, from 951 to 999, and losing net tonnage, from 584 to 524. Upon completion of alterations, Captain Hansen took the Tongass north on her first Alaskan cruise.<sup>6</sup>

"One humorous incident occurred when we had a mate aboard by the name of Merkeley. A woman jumped overboard one night as the ship was going up Stevens Passage. He (the mate) got a boat in the water....he was able to save her. This occurred about 1937 or 1938...the Juneau papers had big stories, full front page stories on this harrowing experience...a

friend of mine used to own the Alaska Press, a fellow by the name of Bill Evans, and so he had this very dramatic story about the saving of this woman's life. In it, he ended the story: 'Of course, there is a rumor she fell through; she didn't jump overboard.'"

"I remember one incident in particular when the skipper, one January, tried to go down the outside through Cross Sound, down the outside to Sitka, and he ran into a severe storm and he almost lost the ship."7

During her years on the Alaskan run for the Alaska Transportation Company, Tongass ran through many captains. Eldred Hansen turned her over to Captain Olaf Hansen again in December of 1938. Olaf Hansen was on two months, then turned the ship over to Lawrence A. Parks on 28 February 1939. Captain Eldred Hansen returned in March and was replaced by Olaf Hansen in May, who was, in turn, replaced by Captain Lawrence A. Parks again in July, and so it continued:

|                         |                                    |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 26 Mar. 1940            | Olaf H. Hansen, Master             |
| 26 Aug. 1940            | Chris L. Ross, Master              |
| 27 Aug. 1940            | Lawrence A. Parks, Master          |
| 15 Oct. 1940            | Olaf H. Hansen, Master             |
| 13 Nov. 1940            | Lawrence A. Parks, Master          |
| 16 Dec. 1940            | Maitland M. Merkley, Master        |
| 23 April 1941           | Lawrence A. Parks, Master          |
| 7 May 1941              | Chris L. Ross, Master              |
| 15 July 1941            | John B. Edwards, Master            |
| 13 Sept. 1941           | Chris L. Ross, Master              |
| <del>21 Jan. 1942</del> | M. M. Merkley, Master              |
| 5 Dec. 1942             | Victor Seidel Luber, Master        |
| 19 May 1943             | Harry A. Clark, Master             |
| 20 July 1943            | Arne Monsen, Master                |
| 1 Sept. 1943            | Harry Clark, Master                |
| 22 Nov. 1944            | M. M. Merkley, Master <sup>8</sup> |

Steam schooners, even in these late years were quite different from offshore ships. Ralph Martin, A.B., signed on Tongass with some of his cronies for a Coastwise voyage to Alaska. Used to offshore voyages and more modern ships, he was quite surprised by things on Tongass.

"Those sea watches were our first shock. I still remember the first time I relieved the wheel...

"How's she heading, ' I asked. That's when the shock came, for he gave me the course in compass points instead of degrees... All offshore courses are given to the quartermaster in degrees, so that, even the 32 points were a little rusty...

"The steering kept me fully occupied, as the Tongass didn't have that labor-saving marvel, the steering engine. Chain and cable led directly to a drum on the wheel so that all the assistance to the steersman had was his brute strength.

"Courses steered in Puget Sound and the Inland Passage seldom last long. That first half hour was the only time I had for faking. I knew that sooner or later a course change would come and I would have to either be prepared to admit my ignorance of the point system or do a fast job of improvising... I had made up my mind that I could get out of the problem with more than a fifty-fifty chance of success. And so it proved for me.

"But others were apparently not so successful. For when I came on the wheel again, eight hours later, I found my old familiar degree system in full control of the wheelhouse. Nine offshore seamen, unfamiliar with using the point system, had been too much for the captain and the mates.

We had made Christians out of them and the victory was ours."<sup>9</sup>

Tongass' voyages to Alaska were pretty much routine. The Articles stated that the voyage was to be "from Seattle to a point in the Pacific Ocean to the northward of Seattle, Washington, and thence to, or as may be ordered by the U. S. Government..."<sup>10</sup>

Crews were larger than before. Harry A. Clark took her north in February 1945 with a pilot, three mates, one radio operator, a purser, chief engineer, a 2nd assistant engineer (she was still missing engineers), three firemen-oilers, three winchmen, nine A. B. s, a cook/steward, a galleyman, and three messmen. The trip north and back took 18 days.<sup>11</sup>

The voyages continued through 1945 and 1946 with regular changes of command.

|               |                                     |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2 Aug. 1945   | Lowell E. Smith, Master             |
| 24 Aug. 1945  | John B. Edwards, Master             |
| 3 Oct. 1945   | M. M. Merkley, Master               |
| 23 Jan. 1946  | L. E. Smith, Master                 |
| 21 Feb. 1946  | A. Clark Hare, Master               |
| 14 May 1946   | Eugene Butts, Master                |
| 30 Sept. 1946 | Chris L. Ross, Master <sup>12</sup> |

In January 1947, Tongass went on the Todds Shipyard Drydock at Plant B in Seattle for a routine drydock and annual inspection. Most of the work was pretty routine. A new nut was made for the propeller shaft, some pipe repairs were made, some keel shoe was replaced and some caulking done. Two shots of anchor chain were also replaced.<sup>13</sup>

U. S. Coast Guard Hull Inspector Lee Moyer stated in his report that Tongass was "...seaworthy only for certified route.\* Hull planks and frames bored...hull planks seaworthy but exterior scuffed and gouged in places; frames are soft in places. Vessel complies with the now existing rules and laws relative thereto as enforced by the U. S. C. G.; all the required equipment tested during this inspection and found good."<sup>14</sup>

Tongass was tied up at Pier 58, Seattle, on 10 April 1947 when the S. S. Reef Knot entered the same slip to work cargo at the Olympic Steam Dock. The Reef Knot "struck ship's guard rail violently on starboard quarter, also buckled planks on dock."<sup>15</sup> The Coast Guard examined Tongass and found a knee and beam to be slightly sprung. The ship made a little more water than usual and further examination was left to be accomplished at the next regularly scheduled drydocking.<sup>16</sup>

Richard S. MacRae took command of Tongass on 5 May 1947 for voyage #72, the only Alaskan voyage for which we have a schedule.<sup>17</sup>

Tongass sailed from Seattle at 2125, 9 May 1947. She couldn't buck the tide in Duncan Bay, B. C., and anchored to wait it out. Ketchikan was made on the 13th and left astern the next day. Tongass spent five hours of the 14th at anchor in Wrangell Narrows waiting out the tide and then made Petersburg the same day, sailing

\*The certified route was "Pacific Ocean Coastwise between Puget Sound and Southeastern Alaska, as far as Cape Spencer via inside passage."



again just before midnight. In Taku Arm, Tongass anchored for almost eight hours to await a favorable tide. Juneau was made on the 15th and left on the 16th. She landed at Haines and Skagway, both on the 17th. On the 18th Tongass made stops at Hoonah and Pelican, and arrived at Tenakee on the 19th. Tongass revisited Petersburg on the 20th, sailing just after midnight of the 21st. This time fog stopped her in Wrangell Narrows for three hours. Ketchikan was visited on the 22nd. Five days later on 27 May, Tongass ended her voyage in Seattle.<sup>18</sup>

On 6 June 1947, Coast Guard Inspectors Emmery H. Joyce and Russel V. Knight examined Tongass at the Todds Yard, Seattle. "Made survey of this vessel's hull. Vessel has been drydocked for survey only and no other work was accomplished. Vessel's hull is in fair condition. Vessel will now be laid up and put out of commission," wrote Inspector Joyce.<sup>19</sup>

Two more captains are shown in the ship's Documentation History. Eugene E. Butts became Tongass' master on 10 June 1947, to be succeeded by H. E. Sievers on 5 January 1949. Her name appears in the U. S. Merchant Ship Registry through 1956. Tongass' (ex-Wapama) document was surrendered on 27 March

1957.<sup>20</sup>

### Lone Survivor

McCormick's first ship, the Bendixsen-built Cascade was "sold alien" in 1906, going to the Hawaiian Islands.<sup>1</sup> By 1922, the McCormick fleet included six wooden steam schooners: Celilo, Everett, Multnomah, Wakeena, Wapama, and the Wilamette. Today, only Wapama survives.

Celilo, built in 1913, ran until 1930 when she was temporarily laid up in Oakland.<sup>2</sup> Later, she was operated again in conjunction with Wapama for Inter-Ocean Steamship and then with Alaska Transportation. Celilo was taken out of service in 1946<sup>3</sup> and laid up in Suisun Bay. Eventually Celilo burned to the water. Parts of her engine were salvaged by the State of California for use in the restoration of the Wapama.

The Everett of 236 feet was a wooden, twin-screw steam schooner of short life. She was launched at St. Helens in 1920 and burned off Table Bluff near Eureka on 26 October 1926. Captain John Foldat, formerly of Wapama, served as her Captain.<sup>4</sup>

The first McCormick-built steam schooner, Multnomah, survived a serious grounding on Peacock Spit (just inside the Columbia River) to be abandoned due to deterioration in 1932.<sup>5</sup>

The Wakeena was a Wilson Bros. product, having been built in Astoria in 1917. She stranded in 1929 at Grays Harbor, Washington.<sup>6</sup>

Wilamette, built in 1911 at Bendixsen's Fairhaven Yard, was the intended victim of pirates in 1913. Two men tried to rob the ship of \$2,000, but were apprehended by the ship's officers.<sup>7</sup>

Wilamette commonly ran to Mexico with her lumber cargoes until she foundered off Crescent City in 1942.<sup>8</sup>

By 1958, only Wapama remained in Seattle's Lake Union to represent the McCormick fleet. A badly deteriorated vessel with her engine dismantled for the scrap brass it yielded, Wapama was purchased by the State of California to become a part of the San Francisco Maritime State Historic Park.

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